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## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS

### Statement of Rep. Ben Cline (VA-06) Budget Committee Members' Day Testimony February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

I came before this committee last year to testify on our irresponsibly growing national debt. I said then and intend to continue to uphold it now - I promised the citizens of Virginia's Sixth Congressional District that I would reintroduce four words to Washington - 'we can't afford it.'

The definition of afford is quite simple: to manage to bear without serious detriment. Its derivative shows that the ability to afford something has a significant impact on future. This is a simple concept and one that many state legislatures understand and work with, but one that Congress has now unnecessarily complicated. In fact, my home state of Virginia is one such example of a state legislature that must balance its budget because it is constitutionally required. This should be no different at the Federal level.

Our Federal debt is now over \$23 trillion dollars. It is unconscionable that the last time a Federal budget with a surplus was signed into law was 1997 - 23 years ago. As lawmakers, we need to ensure our colleagues understand the gravity of their responsibility of knowing what we can truly afford as a nation.

Balancing the Federal budget has become overly difficult, largely due to the Federal Government's overreach in a wide swath of areas. I commend past and current champions who are committed to undertaking the large job of balancing the budget by negotiating across the aisle, across the Chambers, and with both Democrat and Republican Administrations. Such negotiations

led to the deficit reductions that created that 1997 surplus. I am committed to being a champion for a balanced budget and hope that you as committee Members will make that same commitment.

The implications of failing to balance a budget, much less not even pass one, are grave. It puts our national security at risk, it steals opportunities from the hands of future generations, and is ultimately unsustainable.

The bottom line is that we ask Americans to balance their budgets, and as lawmakers who are entrusted by constituents to use discretion and exercise discipline when spending their hard earned money, we must move crafting and passing a fiscally responsible budget that balances to the forefront of our legislative agenda.